

Effectiveness of Group Therapy Transactional Analysis Approach to Increasing Marital Intimacy

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Abstract: This study is of quasi-experimental studies and unequal control group (pretest-posttest) type which aims to assess the efficacy of the treatment group with transactional analysis approach on marital intimacy in the city of Mashhad. The study population consisted of all couples referred to Education Department of Mashhad for counseling due to marital discord in the period of 1/21/2015 until 3/6/2015. Twenty couples signed up voluntarily who were put in two groups of test (10 couples) and control (10 couples). The means used in this study was Thompson and Walker intimacy scale (1983). The training was performed based on transactional analysis during 10 sessions of 2 hours on experimental group and the control group was not provided with any special training. At the end, both groups were tested. The results showed that group therapy with transactional analysis method is effective on marital intimacy of subjects ($p = 0.05$).

Key words: Group therapy, transactional analysis, marital intimacy, transactional, Mashhad

INTRODUCTION

It can be said that relationship is not only one of the oldest but also the greatest human's achievements (Bolton, 2012). Relationship is like an alive creature which can grow up or remain immobile (Vice, 2014). Family is one of the most important pillars of society in all human history and states, so that this key element plays a fundamental role in society's survival while the factor in family formation is marriage (Omidvar *et al.*, 2009).

Marriage is the most fundamental and crucial human relationship, because it provides the primitive structure to establish family relationships and training the next generation (Larson and Holman, 1994). The relationship between wife and husband has been considered as the longest relationship in all times (Navie, 1998).

A healthy and constructive interaction between humans and establishing a love of fellow and mutual intimacy are considered as aspects of human social life (Edalati and Redzuan, 2010). Psychologists define intimacy as the ability to communicate with others and express our feeling and know it as human's certain right and natural state (Blume, 2006).

Sternberg, R.J. considers intimacy as one of the sides of a triangle of love and emotional element including warmth, affectionate relationship, showing love to counterpart and a tendency to mutually respond spouse's needs (Heidar *et al.*, 2014). One of the emotional needs for couples is a relationship followed with intimacy which is an important source of happiness, significance and marital satisfaction in life (Ibrahimi *et al.*, 2011).

Intimacy is defined as a very important behavioral pattern in marital relationships which possesses emotional- thrilling and social aspects and forms based on satisfaction and love (Houten, 2007). The one who experiences more intimacy in relationships is able to desirably offer himself in such relations and more effectively present his needs to his partner (Patrick *et al.*, 2007).

Studies and clinical experience have indicated that couples experience many problems while communicating, preserving intimacy and satisfying mutual needs in the modern society. Creating, preserving and satisfying mutual emotional and mental needs is an art in the marriage process in which in addition to mental health and primary healthy experiences, it requires logical attitudes, skill acquisition and doing special tasks (Nasr *et al.*, 2013).

In a longitudinal study, Weinberger *et al.* (2008) concluded that lack of intimacy between couples is an important divorce predictor in middle age (Weinberger *et al.*, 2008). Berak found that failure in intimate relationship is related to loneliness experience, marital dissatisfaction, physical and Psychiatric problems such as depression, psychosomatic diseases and marital abuse (Broucke *et al.*, 1995).

Hosseini *et al.* (2013), in their research titled the effectiveness of group consultation using Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) in increasing the marital intimacy of women in Qom showed that group consultation through this approach was significant on increasing the total marital intimacy of participants in dimensions of intimacy, an increase in emotional,

psychiatric, marital and time spending intimacy and there was no significant difference between two groups in other dimensions of marital intimacy such as logical, physical, spiritual, Aesthetic and social-entertainment intimacies (Tayebe *et al.*, 2013).

Ibrahimi *et al.* (2011) indicated that training relationship enriching program significantly increased the intimacy and all intimacy subscales of employed couples in pretest and posttest (Ibrahimi *et al.*, 2011). Akbari *et al.* (2012) in a research done in Mehr, Lamard and Firozabad provinces showed that Group Therapy Transactional Analysis was influential on increasing satisfaction, compatibility, positive emotions and intimacy and also it reduced marriage instability, depression and anxiety of couples engaged in emotional divorce (Akbari *et al.*, 2012).

One of the most influential psychiatric theories solving the problems of human relations is the Bren's Transactional Analysis theory (Hamid and Mustafa, 2012). Anyway, Transactional Analysis (TA) is the theory noticing interpersonal relations, the process of life events and individuals' mutual reactions and it has presented applied solutions related to interpersonal issues. According to Bren's, applying transactional analysis is various in marital matters and social ties (Bren, 2013).

Transactional analysis theory can make human aware of the unknown parts through defining parent, adult and child, so they can save him from past. Therapy's first goal is to decontaminate the state of adult ego and identify beliefs structures, different feeling and thoughts of patients. Patients are banned to contemplate about the past because it is a kind of Archaeological game (Widosun, 2014).

However, regarding Burlson and Denton's findings (1997) showing that lack of communicational skills are not the only reason of problems in marital relationships, we can expect that training transactional analysis can prevent couple's misunderstanding through creating a friendly atmosphere and removing mental games especially avoiding negative cuddling and blame (Farahani *et al.*, 2010).

The main question in the present research is that: whether Group Therapy Transactional Analysis approach affects marital intimacy or not?

The research plan: Regarding aim, the present research is an applied research. Due to some restrictions in subject's selection and division, this study is of quasi-experimental studies and unequal control group applied through (pretest-posttest) type.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study population and sampling method: The study population consists of all couples referred to Education Department of Mashhad, 2nd area for counseling due to marital discord in the period of 1/21/2015 until 3/6/2015. The statistical sample consists of referred to Education Department of Mashhad, 2nd area having two preconditions of maximum 5 year marriage and the minimum level of education of bachelor degree who signed up voluntarily and were put in two groups of test and control. The means used in this study was Thompson and Walker intimacy scale. The training was performed based on transactional analysis during 10 sessions of 2 hours on experimental group. At the end, both groups were tested and the results were analyzed Table 1.

The intimacy scale of Thompson and Walker: The intimacy scale is a tool including 17 questions used to measure affection and intimacy. This scale is a part of bigger tool consisting of several intimacy dimensions, but it is presented as an independent scale by its producers. The scores of subjects in this scale are achieved through adding scores divided on 17, the range of scores is between 1-7 in which the higher score shows more intimacy. This scale with 91-97% alpha coefficient is great in internal consistency (Sanae, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first step to analyze data resulted from a test is that such data should be organized in a way in which we collect significant and comprehensive interpretation out of it. Describing data is done using statistics- descriptive methods and the formation of frequency tables, percentages calculation, central indexes and distribution. In the present research, 80 questionnaires were analyzed.

Data analysis: To answer research hypotheses, choosing parametric and non-parametric statistic methods is usually done based on having or not having some hypotheses. One of these hypotheses is the relativity of research variable's measuring scale. In the present research the dependent variable (marital intimacy) is put in the interval level. In addition to measuring scale, we must pay attention to the normality of variable distribution in society and the hypothesis of homogeneity variances. Two mentioned assumptions regarding all statistical analysis are applicable and every statistical technique may have its own assumptions. In the present research,

Table 1: The plan of therapy sessions

Session	The plan of therapy sessions
First	Introduction, familiarizing standard instruction method of transaction analysis and working on therapy contract
Second	Structural and functional analysis of mental states and four situation, giving assignment
Third	Checking last session assignment, explaining cuddling (positive, negative, conditional and unconditional), applying technique for identifying cuddling system, giving assignment (self-stroke)
Fourth	Checking last session assignment, verbal and non-verbal pat - with internal and external sources and methods distinguishing the three sensual states, giving homework
Fifth	Assignment evaluation, efficient and inefficient behavior, Karpman triangle, giving assignments
Sixth	Assignments evaluation, critical and supportive parents, considering inner child, TED Triangle, giving assignment
Seventh	Evaluation of the previous session assignments, mutual complement and cross-meme behaviors (CROS), giving homework
Eighth	Checking assignments, inhibitors (don't Be there, be yourself, etc.), giving assignment
Ninth	Checking assignment, driving (Be perfect, Be strong and ...), giving assignment
Tenth	Introducing three parts of the brain and its impact on relationships, respond to the questions and evaluation of criteria for treatment and therapy sessions, run the posttest

the response to the study hypothesis is done using Analysis of Covariance Method (ANCOVA). Such analysis requires the realization of regression homogeneity assumption. This assumption is discussed in this section.

The normality of variables distribution in the society: We have used Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to evaluate the normality of variable distribution in society. To interpret this test, we can use two ways: the first way is to notice Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z coefficient. In the case of being between -1/96 to +1/96, the distribution is normal. The second way is to notice the level of significance. Meaning that the achieved significant level should be divided into two, if the result was $>0/025$, then the distribution is normal, otherwise it is abnormal (Hosseini, 2003). The result of this analysis is shown in the following Table 2

With regard to this point that the level of significance in Kolmogorov-Smirnov is more than 0/05, then with 95% confidence, we can say that the distribution of variables is normal. Checking the assumption of variances homogeneity of research variables.

The assumption of variances homogeneity tries to clarify whether the samples are selected from societies with equal variances or not. If this assumption is true, data achieved from the two samples can be combined to obtain unbiased estimates of population variance (Ferguson and Pushito, 2004). To investigate the homogeneity of variance we have used equality test of Levene error variances. According to the achieved significant level in this test, we can judge homogeneity or non-homogeneity of variances. So that, if the achieved significant level is more than $p = 0/05$, the variances are equal and vice versa (Brace *et al.*, 2005). In this part, we have used Levene's test (for ANOVA) to test the assumption's homogeneity.

According to the finding in Table 3, levens test was not significant ($p > 0/05$), so the homogeneity of variances is confirmed. Checking the regression homogeneity of research variables hypotheses.

Table 2: The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to check the normality of variables distribution

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z coefficient	The level of significance
Marital intimacy pretest	0/47	0/97
Marital intimacy posttest	0/56	0/76

Table 3: Variances homogeneity test of marital intimacy

F rate	Fd1	Fd2	The significant level
1/7	1	38	0/06

Regression homogeneity tries to clarify whether the relation between dependent variable and Auxiliary variables (here pretest score) is equal for all group or not. In order to check this hypothesis, we have used F significance. If this statistic is significant, then data would not support regression homogeneity hypothesis and vice versa (Brace *et al.*, 2005). The results are presented in the following Table 4.

The results in the above table show that the regression homogeneity hypothesis is accomplished by mutual effect of group and pretest score ($F = 3/2$, $p = 0/08$).

Hypothesis: Group therapy transactional analysis approach has a significant effect on marital intimacy. To significantly test the difference between experiment group and control group in dependent variable (marital intimacy), we have used Variance Analysis to control pretest effect.

As it is shown in Table 5, the main effect is significant ($p = 0/00$, $F = 6/4$), so the research hypothesis is confirmed. Meaning that group therapy transactional analysis approach is influential on intimacy. The rate of difference between the scores of control and experiments or the rate of training period effect is $\chi^2 = 0/15$; meaning that the variance of total remaining scores are affected by group therapy transactional analysis approach.

As it is indicated in Table 6, the average of experiment group intimacy (4/3) was more than control group (3/7) after scores modification which represents the influence of group therapy transactional analysis approach on intimacy.

Table 4: The results of regression homogeneity test in marital intimacy variable of control and experiment group

Variable	The source of change	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	The average of squares	F-values	Significant level
Marital intimacy	Group	0/24	1	0/24	6/4	0/02
	Pretest score	2/2	1	2/2	58/1	0/000
	pretest×group	0/12	1	0/12	3/2	0/08

Table 5: variance analysis of intimacy pretest scores

Source of change	Sum of squares	Freedom degree	The average of squares	F-values	Significant level	Eta coefficient
Pretest	2/2	1	2/2	58/1	0/000	0/62
Main effect	0/24	1	0/24	6/4	0/02	0/15
Residual error	1/4	36	0/04			

Table 6: The average of intimacy pretest modified scores

Group	Average	SD
Experiment	4/3	0/04
Control	3/7	0/04

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to study the effectiveness of group therapy transactional analysis on marital intimacy of couples having marital problems in Mashhad city which was done on 20 couples who accepted researcher's invitation. The results showed that group therapy transactional analysis increases couple's marital intimacy in experiment group more than control group. These results are compatible with the research done by Soudani *et al.* (2013) and Hamid and Mustafa (2012) who respectively concluded that training transactional analysis can improve family overall function and the fields in incompatible couples (Soudani *et al.*, 2013) and such religion-oriented training can increase love, affection, respect and marital satisfaction. Furthermore, Nouri *et al.* (2013), Ibrahim *et al.* (2012) and Fotoohi *et al.* (2011) indicated that training communicational skills improves family function.

Transactional analysis method can lead to improvement in interpersonal relationships such as improving the performance and stress tolerance, awareness of stimuli that triggers the behavior and irrational beliefs, awareness of life disturbed by inefficient drafts, releasing ineffective and grammatical drafts and reformation of self-destructed draft. Therefore, regarding emphasizing this theory in improving adult as a responsible character, it can cause not only behavioral and emotional recognition, but also an increase in responsibility and excitement reduction. In addition, it can be mentioned that lessons of this theory about positive patting, free expression of feelings and self-enclosure followed with a mental security and Mutual empathy can reduce the negative relation among people and replace it with warm and close relations. Warm relation can make couples to express their interests and needs and solve inevitable problems. Lack of necessary communicational skills bans the family and couples to function so and their intimate relations turn into parallel and unfriendly relations.

When all intimate relationships are over, love energy changes to irritation and anger and due to many arguments, it leads to numerous unsolvable problems and criticisms (Omidvar *et al.*, 2009).

It generally seems that transactional analysis therapy helps couples to conclude one of the reasons of unfriendly relationships is disharmonious messages simultaneously sent by them through verbal and non-verbal levels and so they should more explicitly transfer their messages to comprehend each other more. Furthermore, cuddling value is hidden in cuddling receiver. Meaning that couple should know what the need of their partner is because if need satisfaction matches partner's requirement, then he will have pleasant feeling. Cuddling provides two items of security and relation in requirement hierarchy. It makes child feel safe and safety can bring comfort and intimacy. In fact, part of intimate relationship is the relationship between my inner child and my partner's inner child.

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